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ABSTRACT

Goodman's notoriety as a romantic critic has tended to overshadow the positive and constructive dimensions to be found in his libertarian vision of a worthwhile world. Attention should focus on those constructive elements in Goodman's social thought which provide a dynamic framework for human association, i.e., the libertarian community. The interrelated principles of mutual aid, voluntary association, and fraternity, along with the organic integration of the background, or physical structuring of the choices and alternatives of human existence, and the foreground, consisting of human activity, are identified as essential to the realization of such a community. The libertarian community is further characterized as an educative community where learning takes place through individual experience. These considerations help to place Goodman within the broad experimentalists tradition in American education. (Author/JH)

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PAUL GOODMAN, ANARCHISM, AND EDUCATION

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Paul Goodman received widespread recognition as a sharp and insightful critic of our contemporary society and its educational system. Goodman's provocative style in criticizing and condemning those social and educational structures he perceived as doing positive harm to human growth seldom failed to elicit strong reactions from his audiences. For some, Goodman appeared as a prophet, a man of rare sensitivity, foresight, and compassion who voiced their own despair with the "System" and led the way in the search for viable alternatives. For others, Goodman appeared as a "romantic," or worse, whose critical excesses and practical or "utopian" proposals had little relevance to the problems and possibilities of today's world.

Few have recognized that Paul Goodman, the critic, was also and perhaps most importantly a constructive social and educational theorist. Goodman's many and diverse works intersect at crucial points to form a dynamic social hologram, a vision of a free and open society, an educative society, revolving around the face-to-face, intentional, anarchistic community. This libertarian community, the paradigmatic cornerstone of Goodman's social and educational thought, constituted both a dynamic form of human

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human association grounded in individual freedom and a social model for the education of the young. Goodman's search for those conditions which would provide for meaningful community life, individual freedom, and human growth in the context of a mass-urban, technologically complex society cannot be overlooked if a valid assessment of Goodman's thought and place in the history of American Education is to be achieved.

Goodman's conception of community as a functional, unified whole must be approached and understood in Gestaltist terms. The starting point, for Goodman, in any "theorizing" about individual or group life is the dynamic organism/environmental interaction.[1] The constructive elements operating in a libertarian community which will be identified here overlap and are interwoven in a manner analogous to the threads in a multi-colored tapestry. While these elements can be separated for purposes of explanation, an understanding of Goodman's notion of community can be achieved only by grasping the dynamic whole of which these elements are a part.

In Drawing the Line,[2] People or Personnel,[3] and Like a Conquered Province[4] and in various essays such as "Getting Into Power"[5] and "Utopian Thinking"[6] the traditional libertarian principles of voluntary association, mutual aid, and fraternity are identified by Goodman as the fundamental social principles operating in the libertarian community. Voluntary association, for Goodman, draws on the socially cohesive influence of forces

intrinsic to group life.[7] "Control," "power," and/or "authority" stems from functions intrinsic to such groups - from the "intrinsic energies and ends-in-view."[8] Mutual aid and fraternity, in turn, become functional forces within the social context of voluntary associations.

Goodman recognized, however, that the conditions of our mass-urban, technologically complex society were such that attention to social principles alone would not insure individual freedom and meaningful community life. The realization of a libertarian community requires an organic integration of the "background" and "foreground" of human existence. In Communitas Goodman notes:

> They [man-made things] lie underneath, they loom around as the prepared place of our activity .... Against this background we do our work and strive toward our ideals, or just live out our habits; yet because it is background, it tends to become taken for granted and to be unnoticed .... The background of the physical plant and the foreground of human activity are profoundly and intimately dependent on one another.[9]

The physical background structures the alternatives and choices available to first the child and later the man. Central to the fostering of freedom and initiative in the foreground of human activities is a background consistent with such activities. The integration of the background and foreground of daily life would yield a community where "the producing and the product are a piece and every part of life has value in itself as both means and end."[10] The question of means emerges at the heart of Goodman's

conception of meaningful community life.

The functioning of the means of society, that is, the background of human activity, shapes the form of social interaction in group life. Goodman focuses attention on subjecting the functions of various means, that is, their use and the social consequences of that use, to a formal moral-aesthetic critique:

> Form follows function, but let us subject the function itself to a formal critique. Is the function good? Bona fide? Is it worthwhile? Is it worthy of a man to do that? What are its consequences? .... We have grown unused to asking such ethical questions of our machines, our streets, our cars, our towns.[11]

When technic or an aspect of the background loses the intimate sensibility of daily life it loses human scale and is destructive of community life and individual freedom. The integration of the background and foreground in the libertarian community would provide for the time, size, energy, and need for space of actual people.[12]

Goodman's concern with the background of daily life reflects an awareness of the subtle forces in a post-industrial society which limit individual freedom. Goodman's positive definition of freedom directs attention to these forces:

> We must understand freedom in a very positive sense: it is the condition of initiating activity. Apart from this pregnant meaning, mere freedom from interference is both trivial and in fact cannot be substantially protected. For even while persons feel themselves inviolate in their bodies, their rights, their families, etc., they are effectively hemmed in, imposed on, and their resources for action pre-empted.[13]

While an individual may not be prohibited by law from undertaking a particular course of action, the conditions surrounding that action may pre-empt the necessary means or simply overwhelm the individual. The size, complexity, and impersonality of the background can undercut initiative and make freedom in such situations rather meaningless.

The principles of voluntary association, mutual aid, and fraternity along with the organic integration of the background and foreground of daily life constitute the fundamental theoretical elements of the face-to-face, intentional, libertarian community. This social framework becomes a pedagogical framework in Goodman's considerations of the task of growing up and the context within which such growth is possible.

Education, for Goodman, is a natural function of the face-to-face, intentional community.[14] The principles which make for meaningful community life also provide the pedagogical conditions which are necessary for the young to learn and grow. The sense of freedom which Goodman depicts as the touchstone and goal of the libertarian community is noted as being indispensable in the education of the young. The child learns by freely testing, experimenting, and exploring his social and environmental background.[15] The principles of mutual aid and fraternity, in turn, meet the child's need for face-to-face contact with a variety of adults who will pay attention to the child and provide the necessary

"models" for the child to identify with and imitate.[16] The organic integration of the background and foreground of daily life provided by such communities is necessary for the child to learn by doing, to develop a sense of causality, and to retain initiative.[17] Voluntary association, mutual aid, fraternity, and the organic integration of the background and foreground of daily life underlie the "Mini-Schools" Goodman proposes as a model for elementary education.[18] They constitute the foundation of the "Youth Work Camps" Goodman suggests for adolescence,[19] and they are easily discernable in the "Community of Scholars" proposed for young adults.[20]

Goodman's practical or utopian proposals for the education of the young, grounded in the pedagogical dimensions of the libertarian community, are not intended to serve as the framework for another System.[21] Goodman addresses the pragmatic functions of these proposals in the following:

> In the context of a pragmatic social science, utopian thinking at once falls into place. Utopian ideas may be practical hypotheses, that is, expedients for pilot experimentation. Or they may be stimuli for response so that people get to know what they themselves mean.[22]

Proposals for educational change are to be considered, in one sense, as practical hypotheses calling for action research. The educational value of such ideas must be determined in an experimental context. In a second sense, such proposals are to function as intellectual "tools" for initiating, through dialogue, the

reconstruction of contemporary education.

Goodman's focus on the pedagogical dimensions of community, his grounding of human growth and learning in experience, and his experimentalist attitude toward determining the pedagogical value of alternative educational settings places him within the broad experimentalist tradition in the history of American Education. Goodman's insights into the relationships which exist between the foreground and background of group life in a technological society, and his concern with reclaiming the significance of the individual in this context might well contain a significant contribution to this tradition. In any event, the characterization of Paul Goodman as primarily a romantic critic is unwarranted. A new and serious attitude toward Goodman's thought is in order.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Paul Goodman, Ralph F. Hefferline, and Frederick Perls, Gestalt Therapy (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1951), p. 288.

[2] Paul Goodman, Drawing the Line (New York: Random House, 1962).

[3] Paul Goodman, People or Personnel (New York: Random House, 1968).

[4] Paul Goodman, Like a Conquered Province (New York: Random House, 1968).

[5] Paul Goodman, "Getting Into Power," People or Personnel and Like a Conquered Province, ed. Paul Goodman (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p.

[6] Paul Goodman, "Utopian Thinking," Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals, ed. Paul Goodman (New York: Random House, 1964).

[7] Goodman, "Getting Into Power," p. 180.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Paul Goodman and Percival Goodman, Communitas (New York: Random House: 1968), p. 3.

[10] Ibid., p. 220.

[11] Ibid., p. 19.

[12] Goodman, Like a Conquered Province, p. 313.

[13] Paul Goodman, "Reply on Pornography and Censorship," Patterns of Anarchy, eds. Leonard I. Krimerman and Lewis Perry (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), p. 55.

[14] Paul Goodman, Compulsory Mis-Education (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 16.

[15] Paul Goodman, The Community of Scholars (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 310.

[16] Goodman, Compulsory Mis-Education, p. 141.

[17] Paul Goodman, Growing Up Absurd (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 73.

[18]Paul Goodman, New Reformation: Notes of a Neolithic Conservative (New York: Random House, 1970).

[19]Paul Goodman, "Youth Work Camps," Utopian Essays and Practical Proposals, pp. 263-273.

[20]Goodman, The Community of Scholars.

[21]Goodman, People or Personnel, p. 27.

[22]Goodman, "Utopian Thinking," pp. 19-20.